PUBLIC LIBRARY
FORT WAYNE & ALLEN CO., IND.

M. L.

ANNEX

cop. 1

811 R56d

PUBLIC LIBRARY
Fort Wayne and Allen County, Ind.

EXTRACTS FROM RULES

A fine of two cents a day shall be paid on each volume not returned when book is due. Injuries to books, and losses must be made good. Card holders must promptly notify the Librarian of change of residence under penalty of forfeiture of card.

EXTRACT FROM STATE LAW

Whoever shall wilfully or mischievously, cut, mark, mutilate, write in or upon, or otherwise deface any book, magazine, newspaper, or other property of any library organized under the laws of this state, shall be fined not less than ten dollars nor more than one hundred dollars.

Acme Library Card Pocket

KEEP YOUR CARD IN THIS POCKET

LIBRARY BUREAU CAT. NO. 1165

DO NOT REMOVE CARDS FROM POCKET

REA

FRIENDS
OF ACPL

ANNEX

# DIONYSUS IN DOUBT

## A BOOK OF POEMS

By

EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON

Avon's Harvest
Captain Craig
Collected Poems
The Man Against the Sky
The Man Who Died Twice
Merlin
The Porcupine
Roman Bartholow
The Three Taverns
Van Zorn

# DIONYSUS IN DOUBT

## A BOOK OF POEMS

BY

EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON

811
R56d

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY
OF
FORT WAYNE AND ALLEN COUNTY, IND.

New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1925

*All rights reserved*

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

COPYRIGHT, 1925,
BY THE MACMILLAN COMPANY.

Set up and electrotyped. Published March, 1925.

FORT WAYNE AND ALLEN COUNTY
PUBLIC LIBRARY

TO

CRAVEN LANGSTROTH BETTS

148678

Poems included in this volume have been reprinted from Poetry, The Masque of Poets, The New Republic, The Nation, The Bermondsey Book, Theatre Arts Magazine, The Century, The Bookman, The Saturday Review of Literature, The Literary Review, The Yale Review, The Forum and The Dial.

# CONTENTS


PAGE

Dionysus in Doubt ..... 13

Sonnets ..... 33

Haunted House ..... 35

The Sheaves ..... 36

Karma ..... 37

Maya ..... 38

As It Looked Then ..... 39

Silver Street ..... 40

Genevieve and Alexandra ..... 41

Sonnets ..... 61

A Man in Our Town ..... 63

En Passant ..... 64

Not Always. I ..... 65

Not Always. II ..... 66

Why He Was There ..... 67

Glass Houses ..... 68

Mortmain ..... 69

PAGE

SONNETS....87

The Laggards....89

New England....90

"If the Lord Would Make Windows in Heaven"....91

Battle After War....92

The Garden of the Nations....93

Reunion....94

DEMOS AND DIONYSUS....95

# DIONYSUS IN DOUBT

## DIONYSUS IN DOUBT

From earth as far away
As night from day,
Or sleep from waking,
Somewhere a dawn like none
Before was breaking.
For long there was no sight or sound
Of any other one
Than I that was alive on that strange ground,
When surely and ineffably aware
That something else was there,
I turned and saw before me, ivy-crowned,
Flame-born of Zeus and of a burning mother,
One of the wasteful gods that will be found
Though variously renowned,
Commensurable only with another.
And had he not been what he was—
Had he been one to live and have his day
Like us, who come and go away,—

My fancy might have made as if to see
Within his deathless eyes
A weariness, an incredulity,
And a benign surprise,
When over them would slowly pass,
Thinly and intermittently,
The filmy cloud of a cold augury.

"And what is this that we have here below?"
He said; whereat his eyes began to shine
As with a humor that was not for man
To fathom: "Will you tell me, if you can?
For you should know it well—
If not the story there may be to tell
Of a complacent yet impatient folk,
Anticipating and somewhat at ease
Already with millennial ecstasies
Of much too much at once. You know
All that, and—even so."
As if a languid shrug would say the rest,
And say it best,
He paused, inquiringly;
Then with a downward finger made me look

Till I made out to see
A place that was no other land than mine.
"How long must you be waiting for a sign—
All you down there?" said he.

Having no converse with a god before,
Humility forbore
Too brisk an estimate; whereat he smiled,
And partly frowned. "Where man remains a child,
The days are always longer than they are,
And there are more of them than are to be
As they have been. All which is true," said he,
"Of an inflexible and hasty nation
That sees already done
Rather too much that has not yet begun.
I mention them that are so confident
In their abrupt and arbitrary ways
Of capturing and harnessing salvation
With nets and ropes of words that never meant
Before so little as in these tiresome days
Of tireless legislation;
Also I marvel at a land like yours,
Where predatory love

In freedom's name invades the last alcove;
And I foresee a reckoning, perforce,
That you, not eager to see far
From where your toys and trumpets are,
Make nothing of.

"Wherefore your freedom, given a time to pause,
Vindictively and unbecomingly
Becomes a prodigy for men to fear—
Or so she looks to me.
Appraising her from here,
I make of her an insecure delight
For man's prolonged abode,
And the wrong thing for him to meet at night
On a wrong road.
No wonder there are many of you perplexed
At her deceiving singularities,
And hazarding your fancy on the next
Of her oblique appearances;
Albeit as always you may only gape
And smile at her uncertain face and shape,
And thereby be indifferently amused—
Recovering too late your derelictions,

To find your tardy maledictions
All outlawed and refused.

"Freedom, familiar and at ease meanwhile
With your perennial smile,
Goes on with her old guile:
Having enjoined your conscience and your diet,
She spreads again her claws,
Preparatory, one infers,
From energy like hers,
For the infliction of more liberty;
And reckless of who reads them or desires them,
Regardless of who heeds them or requires them,
Fearful of someone left who might be quiet,
She clamps again her jaws
And makes a few more laws;
And you, you millions, or as many of you
As have not your herd-servitude in check,
Conspire somehow by law to wring the neck
Of nature, not seeing how large a neck it is
That your beneficent severities
Would humble and subdue—
To moronize the million for the few.

Oblivious of the many-venomed ways
Attendant on their failing who should fail,
By soporific tyranny misled
Into a specious maze
Where vermin unsupposable are bred,
You may not see a sign of the snake's tail
Whereon you are to tread."

With that he shook his head
As with a questioning, I thought,
Of his onslaught
Upon a fervid if inadequate
Insistence of an adolescent giant
To hang itself, if possible, defiant
Alike of too much weight
And of an ill-spun rope.
In weakness indirectly there was hope
For an unransomed kidnapped juvenile
Miscalled Democracy.
He met my divination with a smile
Of Heliconian serenity,
And soon resumed
His utterance as to one for faith entombed:

"Yes, there is hope where you believe it is;
Also intelligence is hidden there—
Much as a tree's unguessed immensities
Are hidden in a seed.
But more than both
Of these that are so excellent,
And so long in arriving,
Hypocrisy, timidity, and sloth
Are there and are all thriving.
Yes, they are there indeed:
I see them and assay their qualities;
Not many of them are fair,
Nor any of them so rare
As to be known with more astonishment
Than are the most of man's idolatries,
Wherein you find him almost everywhere
Perniciously at prayer
For consummation and a furtherance
Of his benevolent ingrained repression
Of the next man's possession.
All which has no illusion, or surprise,
Or pleasure for my eyes.
If I withhold from yours the benefit

Of seeing with mine within and round about
Your region here below,
Whereto your steps will soon again be going—
Sometimes it may be better not to know
Than to be stoned for knowing."

Here my remonstrance with a smooth rebuff
Was laughed at once aside:
"All that is coming will come soon enough,"
He said, "and it will be no balm for pride;
And one forlorn prediction will achieve
No remedy or reprieve.
There are some fiery letters never learned
Till children who are reading them are burned
Before they are aware of any fire.
Remember that, all you that would aspire,
Unsinged and all alone,
To the unseen and the discredited,
And to the best for you unknown.
If I, meanwhile,
Appropriate the salvage of a smile,
You may take heart, and cease to look ahead.
Fatuities ripe for dying will be dead

Sometime, imaginably;
Wherefore, to be the more commendable
To my esteem, you may as well
Invent for me the best essential name
For him that with one hand puts out
The flame that warms a fluctuating brother,
And meritoriously with the other
Pours unpermitted oil upon his own.
Well, if you falter, give yourself no pain
To say aloud the undiscovered word
That I consign to silence and let be.
The gods will on occasion delve in vain
For nomenclature more profound,
And more absurd,
Than gods have ever heard
For their assurance that a cube is round.
But your proficient idiom, not averse
To nonsense or a nullifying curse,
Will pray for you till you forget
That when a sphere is hammered square
All that was hammered is still there;
Also that Humbug is no less
Himself in his best dress.

I'm watching him, yet I see one that's worse
For your concern than he:
Delinquent in two-fold apostasy,
This other's doings
Are like the tepid wooings
Of him who jilts the woman of his choice
Because another with a shrewder voice,
And with some innuendoes of a past,
Inveigles him until she has him fast,
Innocuous and amenable at last.

Wherever the dissension or the danger
Or the distrust may be,
All you that for timidity
Or for expediency capitulate,
Are negative in yourselves and in the state;
Yet there are worse for you to see,
As everywhere you may remark:
Some animals, if you see them in a manger
And do not hear them bark,
Are silent not for any watch they keep,
Nor yet for love of whatso comes to feed,
But pleasantly and ineffectually

Are silent there because they are asleep.
There are too many sleepers in your land,
And in too many places
Defeat, indifference, and forsworn command
Are like a mask upon too many faces.
There are too many who stand
Erect and always amiable in error,
And always in accommodating terror
Before the glimmering imminence
Of too insistent a sincerity;
Too many are recommended not to see,
Or loudly to suggest,
That opulence, compromise, and lethargy
Together are not the bravest or the best
Among the imaginable remedies
For a young world's unrest;
Too many are not at all distressed
Or noticeably ill at ease
With nature's inner counsel when it means
That if a drowsy wisdom blinks and leans
Too much on legioned innocence
Armed only with a large mistake,
Something is due to shake;

Too many among you, having learned
Expediently how not to think,
Will close your mouths where I'm concerned—
Except to drink."

Over his face once more
There passed a cloud that I had seen before;
But soon the frowning eyes were cleared,
And with another smile
Were fixed on mine a while:
"Sometimes I wonder what machine
Your innocence will employ,"
He said at length,
"When all are niched and ticketed and all
Are standardized and unexceptional,
To perpetrate complacency and joy
Of uniform size and strength;
Sometimes I ponder whether you have seen,
Or contemplated over much down there,
The treacherous way that you are now pursuing,
Or by just what immeasurable expense
Of unexplained omnipotence
You are to make it lead you anywhere

Than to the wonder of a sick despair
That waits upon a gullible undoing.
So much of the insoluble
As that is not for me to tell.
For all I know,
An ultimate uniformity enthroned
May trim your vision very well;
And the poor cringing self, disowned,
May call it freedom and efficiency.
Others would somewhat rather call it hell,
And rather not be quite so free
To blend themselves with mediocrity.
How then your follies are to show
The vengeance they are now concealing,—
What your conformity may then resign
To perils more to fear them mine,—
How safe an average then may be decided,
And what last prize divided,
Are manifestly not for my revealing.
If you are still too drowsy now to keep
The vigil of at least a glance
On that which reinforced intolerance

May next of yours be stealing,
From now to then you had all better sleep.

"In legend once there was a perfect bed,
Which your new freedom has inherited.
By virtue of much stretching and some cleaving,
All bound upon it were conformably
Certificated there for the receiving
Of its whole warmth and hospitality—
One man no longer than another
And every man thereby a brother.
If you misprize my word,
You may look down again from here to see
How eagerly the prisoners will agree
In liberty's illimitable name,
All to be made the same.
If proof inhibits your belief
My observation therein may have erred;
And there may still be no mistake
Of their disparities, or in the status
Of so gratuitous an apparatus
Among contrivances designed
To make men sorry for their kind,

Proving at last a laughter and a grief
To sting them like a snake.

"There are so many stories about snakes
In the perilous book of truth as it is written,
That all who will not read
Or in appearance will not heed—
Though dimly and unwillingly they must—
An inward venom of a slow mistrust,
May never tell you by a word or look
By what less pleasant serpent they are bitten
Than any in the book.
Happy as children eating worm-ripe fruit,
Praising the obvious for the absolute,
They see an end of that which has no end
Of their devising;
Wherefore their bitterness to behold in me,
Malignly and unwittingly,
A bounteous and retaliating friend
Is not surprising.
The gods have methods that are various,
Not always to themselves too clear;
And mine that may destroy you or defend you

Are gentle to those of Him that you revere
So blindly while they rend you,
Till mercifully and at last they end you—
If so they do.
None of you have so long to wait
That you need be importunate,
Or too pestiferous,
In your confused assumption of a state
Not yet prepared for you.
Better prepare the state that you possess
More to the focus of your sightlessness.
So doing, you may achieve to see,
With eyes not then afraid to look at me,
How even the blind, having resumed their senses,
May seize again their few lost evidences
Of an identity.
That which I said before I say again,
As unregarded and as much in vain
As then it was:
Some would have more things done
Today than are begun—
Things that will yet, in spite of the existence
Of an unformed and misapplied assistance,

Come properly to pass;
Though hardly, I should say, by the infliction
Of insult that is organized
Inordinately for the timid fiction
Of benefits no more prized
Than in observance to be seen from here
As if they were dishonored and despised.
Bad laws are like blind pilots authorized
To see not and to care not where they steer."

All this to me was queer;
And on my tongue there was a tendency
To venture, graciously,
A syllable or an implication
That even a god might for a mortal ear,
Without immediate incineration
Of me and my interrogation,
Make his dark words more clear—
When dazzlingly, from all around,
There was a quiet lightning everywhere.
I heard what might have been the sound
Of silence burning in the air;
And there was no god there.

# SONNETS

## HAUNTED HOUSE

Here was a place where none would ever come
For shelter, save as we did from the rain.
We saw no ghost, yet once outside again
Each wondered why the other should be dumb;
For we had fronted nothing worse then gloom
And ruin, and to our vision it was plain
Where thrift, outshivering fear, had let remain
Some chairs that were like skeletons of home.

There were no trackless footsteps on the floor
Above us, and there were no sounds elsewhere.
But there was more than sound; and there was more
Than just an axe that once was in the air
Between us and the chimney, long before
Our time. So townsmen said who found her there.

148678

## THE SHEAVES

Where long the shadows of the wind had rolled,
Green wheat was yielding to the change assigned;
And as by some vast magic undivined
The world was turning slowly into gold.
Like nothing that was ever bought or sold
It waited there, the body and the mind;
And with a mighty meaning of a kind
That tells the more the more it is not told.

So in a land where all days are not fair,
Fair days went on till on another day
A thousand golden sheaves were lying there,
Shining and still, but not for long to stay—
As if a thousand girls with golden hair
Might rise from where they slept and go away.

## KARMA

Christmas was in the air and all was well
With him, but for a few confusing flaws
In divers of God's images. Because
A friend of his would neither buy nor sell,
Was he to answer for the axe that fell?
He pondered; and the reason for it was,
Partly, a slowly freezing Santa Claus
Upon the corner, with his beard and bell.

Acknowledging an improvident surprise,
He magnified a fancy that he wished
The friend whom he had wrecked were here again.
Not sure of that, he found a compromise;
And from the fulness of his heart he fished
A dime for Jesus who had died for men.

## MAYA

Through an ascending emptiness of night,
Leaving the flesh and the complacent mind
Together in their sufficiency behind,
The soul of man went up to a far height;
And where those others would have had no sight
Or sense of else than terror for the blind,
Soul met the Will, and was again consigned
To the supreme illusion which is right.

"And what goes on up there," the Mind inquired,
"That I know not already to be true? "—
"More than enough, but not enough for you,"
Said the descending Soul: "Here in the dark,
Where you are least revealed when most admired,
You may still be the bellows and the spark."

## AS IT LOOKED THEN

In a sick shade of spruce, moss-webbed, rock-fed,
Where, long unfollowed by sagacious man,
A scrub that once had been a pathway ran
Blindly from nowhere and to nowhere led,
One might as well have been among the dead
As half way there alive; so I began
Like a malingering pioneer to plan
A vain return—with one last look ahead.

And it was then that like a spoken word
Where there was none to speak, insensibly
A flash of blue that might have been a bird
Grew soon to the calm wonder of the sea—
Calm as a quiet sky that looked to be
Arching a world where nothing had occurred.

## SILVER STREET

Here, if you will, your fancy may destroy
This house before you and see flaming down
To ashes and to mysteries the old town
Where Shakespeare was a lodger for Mountjoy;
Here played the mighty child who for his toy
Must have the world—king, wizard, sage and clown,
Queen, fiend and trollop—and with no more renown,
May be, than friends and envy might annoy.

And in this little grave-yard, if you will,
He stands again, as often long ago
He stood considering what it signified.
We may have doubted, or be doubting still—
But whether it be all so, or all not so,
One has to walk up Wood Street from Cheapside.

# GENEVIEVE AND ALEXANDRA

## GENEVIEVE AND ALEXANDRA

GENEVIEVE

Why look at me so much as if today
Were the last day on earth for both of us?
Not that I'm caring on my own account—

ALEXANDRA

Now for the love of heaven, dear Genevieve,
And for your love of me, and I'm your sister,
Say why it is that little tongue of yours,
Which God gave you to talk with and so tell
What evil it is that ails you, tells me nothing.
You sent for me as if the world were dying
All round you, quite as dogs do that are poisoned,
And here I am; and I'll be dying soon,
Of common ordinary desperation,
Unless you tell me more now in five minutes
Than I shall ferret for myself in ages.
Moreover, if you leave it all to me,
I'll make it a phenomenon so monstrous

That you may see me flying out of here
Like something scared. What in the Lord's name is it?

GENEVIEVE

Poor child, have you no eyes?

ALEXANDRA

Two, Genevieve;
But they were never sharp enough to find
A way to make the man who married you
See more in me than in six hundred others.
I would have given half my fingers then
To make him look at me as if he saw me;
But it was you he saw, and you were frightened.
I wish the creature might have cared enough
To frighten me! But I was just a thing
With skirts and arms and legs and ears and hair,
Like all the rest he saw—till he saw you.
You know it, and I say it. That's all over.

GENEVIEVE

My God, there's no beginning to some things,
Or I could speak. For two weeks I have waited

For you to make it easy to be hard;
And yet you tell me now that you have eyes!
Did you have eyes last night?

ALEXANDRA

I thought so.

GENEVIEVE

Yes?

ALEXANDRA

You are coming then to something, after all.
You may be coming, if one will only wait,
To what you mean. Surely you don't mean Her?

GENEVIEVE

I'll never look to you again for words
Where I find only silence.

ALEXANDRA

Now I see:
You counted on my old unpleasant way
Of saying to you what you say to the cat.

You've always been an angel, Genevieve;
I understand, and I'll be generous.
I'm old enough, the good Lord knows, who gave me
A feature or two fewer than I could use
Of beauty, and you more than you can use;
Or so it seems. The Lord's ways are past all
Our delving, and we've each of us a book
To read that has a leaf we'll not lay open.
It's an old game, and one Time plays with women
Who cannot meet the Lord half way. That's you,
My angel. There'll be something done about it;
For Time has had an eye even on you
These years together. Don't forget old sayings,
For they are true and they have not much mercy.

GENEVIEVE

And what's this you are saying of old sayings?
It's not the old I want now, but the new.
I've had enough that's old. I've had enough—
Year after year of it. Do I look old?

ALEXANDRA

Not yet; you needn't fret. But even at that,

There's time enough to tear the calendar
When days are dead.

GENEVIEVE

She's older than I am.

ALEXANDRA

She knows, my dear.

GENEVIEVE

She knows it, and he knows it!

ALEXANDRA

But that's not all he knows, or all she knows.

GENEVIEVE

What are you saying now?

ALEXANDRA

Dear Genevieve,
I'm saying something new. Lord save us all,
I'm saying something new. You cried and crumpled

For me to do it, and you only ask,
'What are you saying now?' I'm saying this:
I'm saying there are men to take your gift
Of pride and ice and fear of being mortal,
And having it, to be happy all their days—
And others to do nothing of the sort;
I'm saying also that this man you married
Is not a cyclops or a cannibal
Who means to eat you pretty soon, even though
An alabaster shrine with now and then
A taper burning low, or going out,
Is not what he calls home, or good religion.
He calls it something else, and something worse.
I'm sorry, but he does.

GENEVIEVE

And you defend him.

ALEXANDRA

Defence and understanding, as I know them,
Are not of a necessity the same.

GENEVIEVE

How do you know so much?

ALEXANDRA

I don't know much;
I know a little. I wish you knew a little.

GENEVIEVE

I wish you knew a little more.

ALEXANDRA

You're crying.

GENEVIEVE

Well, if I am, what of it? I am not
The only woman who has ever cried.
I'm not the only woman, I dare say,
Who's in a cage, beating on iron bars
That even other women cannot see.

ALEXANDRA

Surely I see them—with a difference.

GENEVIEVE

How good of you to see them!

Genevieve,
Be quiet until you know yourself again.
You tell of cages and of iron bars,
And there are bars, I grant you: bars enough,
But they are not of iron. Do you believe,
Because a man—a rather furry man
Who likes a woman with a dash of Eve
To liven her insensible perfection—
Looks now and then the other way, that you
Are cribbed in iron for the whole blessed length
Of all your silly days? Why won't you see,
With all those eyes of yours that you don't use,
How little of what you have would be required
To send that other one to Jericho,
Or where you will? I wish I had your face!
If so, you might be free now as I am;
Free as a bird. O Lord, so free, so free!
I'll tell you what I'll do. Some day or other,
When I'm at home, I'm going to throw a brick
At that superb tall monstrous Ching-Chang vase
In the front room, which everyone admires.
There'll be a noise, and that will make a change.

You made a change, and all you get of it,
That I see, is a reason to be jealous.
Lord love us, you'll be jealous next of me,
Because your sacrificing spouse made out
Somehow to scratch my cheek with his hard whiskers
To honor my arrival. He might as well
Have done it with a broom, and I've a guess
Would rather.

GENEVIEVE

I can only say again
I wish you knew a little more.

ALEXANDRA

And I—
I wish you fancied less.

GENEVIEVE

Oh, is it fancy?

ALEXANDRA

Whatever it is, you make it what it is.
I know the man. He wants his house to live in.

He's not the sort who makes another man's
Romance a nightmare for the humor of it;
He's not one to be spinning webs of gold
As if he were a spider with an income;
He's what he is; and you that have him so,
I see, are in the best of ways to lose him.
But who am I, to talk of him? You made me,
And you'll remember that. Now that's all over.

GENEVIEVE

You pat me as you would a little dog.

ALEXANDRA

Of course,

GENEVIEVE

I wish you knew a little more.

ALEXANDRA

My darling, you have honored me three times
In wishing that identical sweet wish;
And if in all agreement with your text
I say as much myself and say it louder,
You'll treasure to my credit, when I'm dead,

One faint remembrance of humility.
Although I don't think you are listening,
I'm saying to you now that I'm an insect.
Lord, what a sigh!

GENEVIEVE

I hear you—all you say;
And what you say to me so easily
May be the end of wisdom, possibly.
And I may change. I don't believe I shall,
Yet I may change—a little. I don't know.
It may be now that I don't care enough;
It may be too that I don't know enough—
To change. It may be that the few lights left
Around the shrine, as you say, may go out
Without my tending them or watching them.
It seems a jealous love is not enough
To bring at once to light, as I have seen it,
The farthest hidden of all mockeries
That home can hold and hide—until it comes.
Well, it has come. Oh, never mind me now!
Our tears are cheap, and men see few of them.
He doesn't know that I know.

ALEXANDRA

Genevieve,
Say something, if you only say you hate me.
Poor child, I cannot ask if you are right—
Or say that you are wrong, until I find
A gleam at least of meaning in all this.
Only, remember that of all small things
That have the most infernal power to grow,
Few may be larger than a few small words
That may not say themselves and be forgotten.
No more, then. I can live without an answer.
Indeed, I may be wrong; and it may be
That you are not my bogey-burdened sister.

GENEVIEVE

The farthest hidden things are still, my dear.
They make no noise. They creep from where they live
And strike us in the dark; and then we suffer.
And you my sister, of all women living,
Have made me know the truth of this I'm saying.
And you, as I'm a fool, know nothing more
Than what I've hardly said. Thank God for that.

ALEXANDRA

Why mock yourself with more unhappy names
Than sorrow shares with reason? Why not lay
For ever, with me to help you if I can,
The last of all the bogeys you have seen
Somewhere in awful corners that are dark
Because you make them so and keep them so?
You like the dark, may be. I don't. I hate it.
Now tell me what it is you've 'hardly said';
For I assure you that you've hardly said it.

GENEVIEVE

Oh yes, I said it; and you might have heard it.
You make a jest of love, and all it means.
I can bear that. The world has always done it,
The world has always borne it. Many men
And women have made laughter out of those
Who might as well have been in hell as here,
Alive and listening. When a love can hold
Its own with change no more, 'twere better then
For love to die. There might be then, perhaps,
If that were all, an easy death for love;
If not, then for the woman.

ALEXANDRA

If that were all?
You speak now as if that were not enough.

GENEVIEVE

It seems it isn't. There's another corner;
And in that corner there's another ghost.

ALEXANDRA

What have I done? Have I done anything?

GENEVIEVE

Yes, you have made me see how poor I am;
How futile, and how far away I am
From what his hungry love and hungry mind
Thought I was giving when I gave myself.

ALEXANDRA

But when his eyes are on you, I can swear
That I see only kindness in his eyes.

GENEVIEVE

I'll send you home if you say that again.

ALEXANDRA

Be tranquil; I shall not say that again.
But tell me more about his hungry mind—
I understood the rest of it. Good Lord,
I never knew he had a hungry mind!

GENEVIEVE

He hasn't one when you are with him.

ALEXANDRA

What!

GENEVIEVE

I say he hasn't one when you are with him.
You feed him. You can talk of what he knows
And cares about. Six years have been enough
To make what little mind I've ever had
A weariness too large for his endurance.
He knows how little I shall ever know;
He knows that in his measure I'm a fool.
And you say there's a—kindness in his eyes!
You tell me that! I'd rather be his dog.

ALEXANDRA

What in the name of ruin, dear Genevieve,
Do you think you are doing now with words?

GENEVIEVE

I'd rather be a by-word in the city,
And let him have his harem and be happy.

ALEXANDRA

It's only your too generous invention,
I'm sure, that gives him one. I'm still about,
And I've a quick ear for iniquities.

GENEVIEVE

To make up for an eye that's not so quick,
Most likely. You may talk yourself to sleep,
Assured that all the while I sit and listen
I shall see only kindness in his eyes.
I'd rather see him coming with a club
Than with his kindness. Though you may not like it,
I know what I would rather do than see
Some of the things that you would have me see.

ALEXANDRA

I'd rather you would see him as he is—
Not as a nightmare that you may have had,
Once on a time, condemns and injures him.

GENEVIEVE

You would not have him injured for the world.
I thought so, but no matter what I thought.
I'd rather live in hovels and eat scraps,
And feed the pigs and all the wretched babies;
I'd rather steal my food from a blind man,
And give it back to him and starve to death;
I'd rather cut my feet off and eat poison;
I'd rather sit and skin myself alive
Than be a fool! I'd rather be a toad
Than live to see that—kindness in his eyes!

ALEXANDRA

Poor Genevieve! Don't think that you alone
Of womankind have had these little fancies.
You are not saying this—don't imagine it.
Your nerves are talking now, and they don't know
Or care what they are saying.

GENEVIEVE

Never mind that.

My needs are many, but I don't need that.

ALEXANDRA

Poor Genevieve!

GENEVIEVE

And don't say that again!

# SONNETS

## A MAN IN OUR TOWN

We pitied him as one too much at ease
With Nemesis and impending indigence;
Also, as if by way of recompense,
We sought him always in extremities;
And while ways more like ours had more to please
Our common code than his improvidence,
There lurked alive in our experience
His homely genius for emergencies.

He was not one for men to marvel at,
And yet there was another neighborhood
When he was gone, and many a thrifty tear.
There was an increase in a man like that;
And though he be forgotten, it was good
For more than one of you that he was here.

## EN PASSANT

I should have glanced and passed him, naturally,
But his designs and mine were opposite;
He spoke, and having temporized a bit,
He said that he was going to the sea:
"I've watched on highways for so long," said he,
"That I'll go down there to be sure of it."
And all at once his famished eyes were lit
With a wrong light—or so it was to me.

That evening there was talk along the shore
Of one who shot a stranger, saying first:
"You should have come when called. This afternoon
A gentleman unknown to me before,
With deference always due to souls accurst,
Came out of his own grave—and not too soon."

## NOT ALWAYS

### I

In surety and obscurity twice mailed,
And first achieving with initial rout
A riddance of weak fear and weaker doubt,
He strove alone. But when too long assailed
By nothing, even a stronger might have quailed
As he did, and so might have gazed about
Where he could see the last light going out,
Almost as if the fire of God had failed.

And so it was till out of silence crept
Invisible avengers of a name
Unknown, like jungle-hidden jaguars.
But there were others coming who had kept
Their watch and word; and out of silence came
A song somewhat as of the morning stars.

## NOT ALWAYS

### II

There were long days when there was nothing said,
And there were longer nights where there was nought
But silence and recriminating thought
Between them like a field unharvested.
Antipathy was now their daily bread,
And pride the bitter drink they daily fought
To throw away. Release was all they sought
Of hope, colder than moonlight on the dead.

Wishing the other might at once be sure
And strong enough to shake the prison down,
Neither believed, although they strove together,
How long the stolid fabric would endure
That was a wall for them, and was to frown
And shine for them through many sorts of weather.

## WHY HE WAS THERE

Much as he left it when he went from us
Here was the room again where he had been
So long that something of him should be seen,
Or felt—and so it was. Incredulous,
I turned about, loath to be greeted thus,
And there he was in his old chair, serene
As ever, and as laconic and as lean
As when he lived, and as cadaverous.

Calm as he was of old when we were young,
He sat there gazing at the pallid flame
Before him. "And how far will this go on?"
I thought. He felt the failure of my tongue,
And smiled: "I was not here until you came;
And I shall not be here when you are gone."

## GLASS HOUSES

Learn if you must, but do not come to me
For truth of what your pleasant neighbor says
Behind you of your looks or of your ways,
Or of your worth and virtue generally;
If he's a pleasure to you, let him be—
Being the same to him; and let your days
Be tranquil, having each the other's praise,
And each his own opinion peaceably.

Two others once did love each other well,
Yet not so well but that a pungent word
From each came stinging home to the wrong ears.
The rest would be an overflow to tell,
Surely; and you may slowly have inferred
That you may not be here a thousand years.

# MORTMAIN

## MORTMAIN

Avenel Gray at fifty had gray hair,
Gray eyes, and a gray cat—coincidence
Agreeable enough to be approved
And shared by all her neighbors; or by all
Save one, who had, in his abused esteem,
No share of it worth having. Avenel Gray
At fifty had the favor and the grace
Of thirty—the gray hair being only a jest
Of time, he reasoned, whereby the gray eyes
Were maybe twenty or maybe a thousand.
Never could he persuade himself to say
How old or young they were, or what was in them,
Or whether in the mind or in the heart
Of their possessor there had ever been,
Or ever should be, more than room enough
For the undying dead. All he could say
Would be that she was now to him a child,
A little frightened or a little vexed,
And now a sort of Miss Methuselah,

Adept and various in obscurity
And in omniscience rather terrible—
Until she smiled and was a child again,
Seeing with eyes that had no age in them
That his were growing older. Seneca Sprague
At fifty had hair grayer, such as it was,
Than Avenel's—an atoll, as it were,
Circling a smooth lagoon of indignation,
Whereunder were concealed no treacheries
Or monsters that were perilous to provoke.

Seneca sat one Sunday afternoon
With Avenel in her garden. There was peace
And languor in the air, but in his mind
There was not either—there was Avenel;
And where she was, and she was everywhere,
There was no peace for Seneca. So today
Should see the last of him in any garden
Where a sphynx-child, with gray eyes and gray hair,
Would be the only flower that he might wish
To pluck, wishing in vain. "I'm here again,"
Seneca said, "and I'm not here alone;
You may observe that I've a guest with me

This time, Time being the guest—scythe, glass, and all.
Time is a guest not given to long waiting,
And, in so far as you may not have known it,
I'm Destiny. For more than twenty years
My search has been for an identity
Worth Time's acknowledgment; and heretofore
My search has been but a long faltering,
Paid with an unavailing gratitude
And unconfessed encouragement from you.
What is it in me that you like so much,
And love so little? I'm not so much a monkey
As many who have had their heart's desire,
And have it still. My perishable angel,
Since neither you nor I may live forever
Like this, I'll say the folly that has fooled us
Out of our lives was never mine, but yours.
There was an understanding long ago
Between the laws and atoms that your life
And mine together were to be a triumph;
But one contingency was overlooked,
And that was a complete one. All you love,
And all you dare to love, is far from here—
Too far for me to find where I am going."

"Going?" Avenel said. "Where are you going?"
There was a frightened wonder in her eyes
Until she found a way for them to laugh:
"At first I thought you might be going to tell me
That you had found a new way to be old—
Maybe without remembering all the time
How gray we are. But when you soon began
To be so unfamiliar and ferocious—
Well, I began to wonder. I'm a woman."

Seneca sighed before he shook his head
At Avenel: "You say you are a woman,
And I suppose you are. If you are not,
I don't know what you are; and if you are,
I don't know what you mean.

"By what?" she said.
A faint bewildered flush covered her face,
While Seneca felt within her voice a note
As near to sharpness as a voice like hers
Might have in silent hiding. "What have I done
So terrible all at once that I'm a stranger?"

"You are no stranger than you always were,"
He said, "and you are not required to be so.

You are no stranger now than yesterday,
Or twenty years ago; or thirty years
Longer ago than that, when you were born—
You and your brother. I'm not here to scare you,
Or to pour any measure of reproach
Out of a surplus urn of chilly wisdom;
For watching you to find out whether or not
You shivered swallowing it would be no joy
For me. But since it has all come to this—
Which is the same as nothing, only worse,
I am not either wise or kind enough,
It seems, to go away from you in silence.
My wonder is today that I have been
So long in finding what there was to find,
Or rather in recognizing what I found
Long since and hid with incredulities
That years have worn away, leaving white bones
Before me in a desert. All those bones,
If strung together, would be a skeleton
That once upheld a living form of hope
For me to follow until at last it fell
Where there was only sand and emptiness.
For a long time there was not even a grave—

Hope having died there all alone, you see,
And in the dark. And you, being as you are,
Inseparable from your obsession—well,
I went so far last evening as to fancy,
Having no other counsellor than myself
To guide me, that you might be entertained,
If not instructed, hearing how far I wandered,
Following hope into an empty desert,
And what I found there. If we never know
What we have found, and are accordingly
Adrift upon the wreck of our invention,
We make our way as quietly to shore
As possible, and we say no more about it;
But if we know too well for our well-being
That what it is we know had best be shared
With one who knows too much of it already,
Even kindliness becomes, or may become,
A strangling and unwilling incubus.
A ghost would often help us if he could,
But being a ghost he can't. I may confuse
Regret with wisdom, but in going so far
As not impossibly to be annoying,
My wish is that you see the part you are

Of nature. When you find anomalies here
Among your flowers and are surprised at them,
Consider yourself and be surprised again;
For they and their potential oddities
Are all a part of nature. So are you,
Though you be not a part that nature favors,
And favoring, carries on. You are a monster;
A most adorable and essential monster."

He watched her face and waited, but she gave him
Only a baffled glance before there fell
So great a silence there among the flowers
That even their fragrance had almost a sound;
And some that had no fragrance may have had,
He fancied, an accusing voice of color
Which her pale cheeks now answered with another;
Wherefore he gazed a while at tiger-lilies
Hollyhocks, dahlias, asters and hydrangeas—
The generals of an old anonymous host
That he knew only by their shapes and faces.
Beyond them he saw trees; and beyond them
A still blue summer sky where there were stars
In hiding, as there might somewhere be veiled

Eternal reasons why the tricks of time
Were played like this. Two insects on a leaf
Would fill about as much of nature's eye,
No doubt, as would a woman and a man
At odds with heritage. Yet there they sat,
A woman and a man, beyond the range
Of all deceit and all philosophy
To make them less or larger than they were.
The sun might only be a spark among
Superior stars, but one could not help that.

"If a grim God that watches each of us
In turn, like an old-fashioned schoolmaster,"
Seneca said, still gazing at the blue
Beyond the trees, "no longer satisfies,
Or tortures our credulity with harps
Or fires, who knows if there may not be laws
Harder for us to vanquish or evade
Than any tyrants? Rather, we know there are;
Or you would not be studying butterflies
While I'm encouraging Empedocles
In retrospect. He was a mountain-climber,
You may remember; and while I think of him,

I think if only there were more volcanoes,
More of us might be climbing to their craters
To find out what he found. You are sufficient,
You and your cumulative silences
Today, to make of his abysmal ashes
The dust of all our logic and our faith;
And since you can do that, you must have power
That you have never measured. Or, if you like,
A power too large for any measurement
Has done it for you, made you as you are,
And led me for the last time, possibly,
To bow before a phantom in your garden."
He smiled—until he saw tears in her eyes,
And then remarked, "Here comes a friend of yours.
Pyrrhus, you call him. Pyrrhus because he purrs."

"I found him reading Hamlet," Avenel said;
"By which I mean that I was reading Hamlet.
But he's an old cat now. And I'm another—
If you mean what you say, or seem to say.
If not, what in the world's name do you mean? "

He met the futile question with a question
Almost as futile and almost as old:

"Why have I been so long learning to read,
Or learning to be willing to believe
That I was learning? All that I had to do
Was to remember that your brother once
Was here, and is here still. Why have I waited—
Why have you made me wait—so long to say so?"
Although he said it kindly, and foresaw
That in his kindness would be pain, he said it—
More to the blue beyond the trees, perhaps,
Or to the stars that moved invisibly
To laws implacable and inviolable,
Than to the stricken ears of Avenel,
Who looked at him as if to speak. He waited,
Until it seemed that all the leaves and flowers,
The butterflies and the cat, were waiting also.

"Am I the only woman alive," she asked,
"Who has a brother she may not forget?
If you are here to be mysterious,
Ingenuousness like mine may disappoint you.
And there are women somewhere, certainly,
Riper for mysteries than I am yet.
You see me living always in one place,

And all alone."

"No, you are not alone,"

Seneca said: "I wish to God you were!

And I wish more that you had been so always,

That you might be so now. Your brother is here,

And yet he has not been here for ten years.

Though you've a skill to crowd your paradigms

Into a cage like that, and keep them there,

You may not yet be asking quite so much

Of others, for whom the present is not the past.

We are not all magicians; and Time himself

Who is already beckoning me away,

Would surely have been cut with his own scythe,

And long ago, if he had followed you

In all your caprioles and divagations.

You have deceived the present so demurely

That only few have been aware of it,

And you the least of all. You do not know

How much it was of you that was not you

That made me wait. And why I was so long

In seeing that it was never to be you,

Is not for you to tell me—for I know.

I was so long in seeing it was not you,

Because I would not see. I wonder, now,
If I should take you up and carry you off,
Like an addressable orang-outang,
You might forget the grave where half of you
Is buried alive, and where the rest of you,
Whatever you may believe it may be doing,
Is parlously employed." As if to save
His mistress the convention of an answer,
The cat jumped up into her lap and purred,
Folded his paws, and looked at Seneca
Suspiciously. "I might almost have done it,"
He said, "if insight and experience
Had not assured me it would do no good.
Don't be afraid. I have tried everything,
Only to be assured it was not you
That made me fail. If you were here alone,
You would not see the last of me so soon;
And even with you and the invisible
Together, maybe I might have seized you then
Just hard enough to leave you black and blue—
Not that you would have cared one way or other,
With him forever near you, and if unseen,
Always a refuge. No, I should not have hurt you.

It would have done no good—yet might perhaps
Have made me likelier to be going away
At the right time. Anyhow, damn the cat."

Seneca looked at Avenel till she smiled,
And so let loose a tear that she had held
In each of her gray eyes. "I am too old,"
She said, "and too incorrigibly alone,
For you to laugh at me. You have been saying
More nonsense in an hour than I have heard
Before in forty years. Why do you do it?
Why do you talk like this of going away?
Where would you be, and what would you be doing?
You would be like a cat in a strange house—
Like Pyrrhus here in yours. I have not had
My years for nothing; and you are not so young
As to be quite so sure that I'm a child.
We are too old to be ridiculous,
And we've been friends too long."

"We have been friends
Too long," he said, "to be friends any longer.
And there you have the burden of a song
That I came here to sing this afternoon.

When I said friends you might have halted me,
For I meant neighbors."
"I know what you meant,"
Avenel answered, gazing at the sky,
And then at Seneca. "The great question is,
What made you say it? You mention powers and laws,
As if you understood them. Am I stranger
Than powers and laws that make me as I am? "

"God knows you are no stranger than you are,
For which I praise Him," Seneca said, devoutly.
"I see no need of prayer to bring to pass
For me more prodigies or more difficulties.
I cry for them no longer when I know
That you are married to your brother's ghost,
Even as you were married to your brother—
Never contending or suspecting it,
Yet married all the same. You are alone,
But only in so far as to my eyes
The sight of your beloved is unseen.
Why should I come between you and your ghost,
Whose hand is always chilly on my shoulder,
Drawing me back whenever I go forward?

I should have been acclaimed stronger than he
Before he died, but he can twist me now,
And I resign my dream to his dominion.
And if by chance of an uncertain urge
Of weariness or pity you might essay
The stranglings of a twofold loyalty,
The depth and length and width of my estate,
Measured magnanimously, would be but that
Of half a grave. I'd best be rational,
I'm saying therefore to myself today,
And leave you quiet. I can originate
No reason larger than a leucocyte
Why you should not, since there are two of you,
Be tranquil here together till the end."

"You would not tell me this if it were true,
And I, if it were true, should not believe it,"
Said Avenel, stroking slowly with cold hands
The cat's warm coat. "But I might still be vexed—
Yes, even with you; and that would be a pity.
It may be well for you to go away—
Or for a while—perhaps. I have not heard
Such an unpleasant nonsense anywhere

As this of yours. I like you, Seneca,
But not when you bring Time and Destiny,
As now you do, for company. When you come
Some other day, leave your two friends outside.
We have gone well without them for so long
That we shall hardly be tragedians now,
Not even if we may try; and we have been
Too long familiar with our differences
To quarrel—or to change."

Avenel smiled
At Seneca with gray eyes wherein were drowned
Inquisitive injuries, and the gray cat yawned
At him as he departed with a sigh
That answered nothing. He went slowly home,
Imagining, as a fond improvisation,
That waves huger than Andes or Sierras
Would soon be overwhelming, as before,
A ship that would be sunk for the last time
With all on board, and far from Tilbury Town.

# SONNETS

## THE LAGGARDS

Scorners of earth, you that have one foot shod
With skyward wings, but are not flying yet,
You that observe no goal or station set
Between your groping and the towers of God
For which you languish, may it not be odd
And avaricious of you to forget
Your toll of an accumulating debt
For dusty leagues that you are still to plod?

But many have paid, you say, and paid again;
And having had worse than death are still alive,
Only to pay seven fold, and seven times seven.
They are many; and for cause not always plain,
They are the laggards among those who strive
On earth to raise the golden dust of heaven.

## NEW ENGLAND

Here where the wind is always north-north-east
And children learn to walk on frozen toes,
Wonder begets an envy of all those
Who boil elsewhere with such a lyric yeast
Of love that you will hear them at a feast
Where demons would appeal for some repose,
Still clamoring where the chalice overflows
And crying wildest who have drunk the least.

Passion is here a soilure of the wits,
We're told, and Love a cross for them to bear;
Joy shivers in the corner where she knits
And Conscience always has the rocking-chair,
Cheerful as when she tortured into fits
The first cat that was ever killed by Care.

## "IF THE LORD WOULD MAKE WINDOWS IN HEAVEN"

She who had eyes but had not wherewithal
To see that he was doomed to his own way,
Dishonored his illusions day by day,
And year by year was more angelical.—
Flaunting an injured instinct for the small,
She stifled always more than she would say;
Nursing a fear too futile to betray,
She sewed, and waited for the roof to fall.

A seer at home, she saw that his high lights
That were not shining, and were not afire,
Were such as never would be seen from there;
A saint abroad, she saw him on the heights,
And feared for him—who, if he went much higher,
Might one day not be seen from anywhere.

## BATTLE AFTER WAR

Out of a darkness, into a slow light
That was at first no light that had a name,
Like one thrust up from Erebus he came,
Groping alone, blind with remembered sight.
But there were not those faces in the night,
And all those eyes no longer were aflame
That once he feared and hated, being the same
As his that were the fuel of his fright.

He shone, for one so long among the lost,
Like a stout Roman after Pentecost:
"Terror will yield as much as we dare face
Ourselves in it, and it will yield no more,"
He said. And we see two now in his place,
Where there was room for only one before.

## THE GARDEN OF THE NATIONS

(1923)

When we that are the bitten flower and fruit
Of time's achievement are undone between
The blight above, where blight has always been,
And the old worm of evil at the root,
We shall not have to crumble destitute
Of recompense, or measure our chagrin;
We shall be dead, and so shall not be seen
Amid the salvage of our disrepute.

And when we are all gone, shall mightier seeds
And scions of a warmer spring put forth
A bloom and fruitage of a larger worth
Than ours? God save the garden, if by chance,
Or by approved short sight, more numerous weeds
And weevils be the next inheritance!

## REUNION

By some derision of wild circumstance
Not then our pleasure somehow to perceive,
Last night we fell together to achieve
A light eclipse of years. But the pale chance
Of youth resumed was lost. Time gave a glance
At each of us, and there was no reprieve;
And when there was at last a way to leave,
Farewell was a foreseen extravagance.

Tonight the west has yet a failing red,
While silence whispers of all things not here;
And round there where the fire was that is dead,
Dusk-hidden tenants that are chairs appear.
The same old stars will soon be overhead,
But not so friendly and not quite so near.

# DEMOS AND DIONYSUS

## DEMOS AND DIONYSUS

DIONYSUS

Good morning, Demos.

DEMOS

I thought you were dead.

DIONYSUS

If you look too assuredly for death
To consummate your preference and desire,
Sometime you may endure, to your surprise
The pang of an especial disappointment.
Why such a fever of unfriendliness?
And why, again, so brief a courtesy?

DEMOS

There was no courtesy. Had I the power
To crown my will with its accomplishment,
The crowning would be brief enough, God knows.

DIONYSUS

And you would then be king.

DEMOS

Say as you like,
Your words are of a measure with your works.

DIONYSUS

If you assume with me too large a license,
How do you know that you may not be seized
With one of my more celebrated frenzies
And eat yourself alive? If you do that,
Who then shall be the king that shall inherit
The realm that is your envy and the dream
Of your immoderate magnificence?

DEMOS

There are to be no kings where I shall reign.

DIONYSUS

Not so? Then how are you to do your reigning?
I'm asking only as an eager child

Might ask as much of an impatient father.
We'll say a patient and unusual child,
Not listening always for a sudden answer.

DEMOS

Your days are as the pages of a book,
And one where Finis waits for no long reading.

DIONYSUS

You are somewhat irrelevant, and too hasty,
But that's to be forgiven of a king.
The king can do no wrong. As for the book
Where Finis waits, how far along are you
In reading it, and thereby in absorbing
The indemnifying gist of what it means?

DEMOS

I have read far enough to find in it
No sure indemnity save one of grief,
And one of death.

DIONYSUS

Nothing of life at all?

DEMOS

Nothing of life to me.

DIONYSUS

How came you then
So neutrally and unecstatically
At one time to be born?

DEMOS

I do not see
More than some words in that.

DIONYSUS

I know you don't,
The book of what you do not see, my friend,
Would have no Finis in it. Your dim faith—
Your faith in something somewhere out of nothing—
And your industrious malevolence
Against yourself and the divine escape
That makes a wine of water when it will—
Or not, if it will not—may soon or late
Consume your folly to a long fatigue,

And to an angry death. You measure me
By something in a flagon or a glass—
And we're away from that. Leaving aside
The lesser and the larger mysteries,
By what obscured immeasurable means
Are you to have in your attractive prison
The music of the world and of the stars
Without me, or to make of love and art
The better part—without me? Do you know?

DEMOS

I do not see the prison.

DIONYSUS

But you will;
And having filled it you may blow it up
In the necessity of desperation.

DEMOS

I do not know your language; and far less
Do I concede with you in love and art
The better part.

DIONYSUS

And that you never will.

DEMOS

I hope not.

DIONYSUS

All you hope will come to pass,
If you achieve your way. You stamp your coin
Of words too small to compass their design,
Or to authenticate their currency.

DEMOS

Yet somehow they are current.

DIONYSUS

So they are;
And so are the uncounted flying seeds
Of death for you to breathe and eat and drink,
Never aware of their ascendency
Till you are down where they're devouring you
And you are groaning to be rid of them.

DEMOS

There are physicians.

DIONYSUS

There are not so many
That you may trust them for immunity
From your disease, or pay them for a cure
With your ingenious coin. Under your sway
They would all be as easily indisposed
As you are now, and at as blind a loss
To say what ailed them. Given release enough,
They might arrive, in a combined rebellion,
At some unethical unanimity
As to the poison most expedient
For the accomplishment of your transition,
But they would never cure you otherwise;
And they will never make you less the monster
That you would be, and may be—for a time.
There are futilities and enormities
That must be loved and honored and obeyed
Before they are found out. If you be one,
Or other, or both, as I believe you are,

God help the credulous and expectant slaves
Of your unconscionable supremacy.

DEMOS

They are expectant, certainly, and wisely;
My argument enfolds them and assures them.

DIONYSUS

And obfuscates their proper sight of you.
In your forensic you are not unlike
The pleasant and efficient octopus,
Who inks the sea around him with a cloud
That hides his most essential devilishness,
Leaving his undulating tentacles
To writhe and shoot and strangle as they may.

DEMOS

By turning your two eyes to land again
You may regard some hundred million souls
Or more that are awaiting my tuition—
Where Reason and Equality, like strong twins,
Will soon be brother giants, overseeing

Incessantly the welfare of them all.
A little strangling will be good for them,
And they will have no courage to complain.

DIONYSUS

They will not have their souls by then. By then,
You and your twins—both illegitimate,
And the most credible liars ever conceived—
Will have reduced their souls to common fuel,
And their obedient selves to poor machines
That ultimately will disintegrate,
Leaving you outcast and discredited,
A king of ruins; though you are not yet worse
Than a malignant and a specious warning—
Albeit you may attain to your desire
If it be fate that you shall be the scourge
Of a slave-ridden state for long enough
To prove and alienate your demonship
Till you are done with. In the mixed meantime.
A thousand men, had they the will to speak,
Might shred your folly to its least of words
And thereby have the ruin less methodized
If not forestalled and thwarted. You may smile

Till you may be as far from recognition
As from a reason why a man should live,
But you will be no lovelier than for that
Than you are now. Why do you wet your lips
With your mendacious tongue, and rub your hands?

DEMOS

Why do I smile? Why do I rub my hands?
Because your thousand men will never speak.
I have you there, my master. Some will curse
Among themselves a little; some will grunt;
Others will shrug their unoffending shoulders
At my offensive name; others will stretch
Themselves, and in the refuge of a yawn
Will say they have enough to last their time
And that the future must attend itself—
As you foresee it will. They are all safe,
And comfortably gagged. They will not speak—
Or not more than a few—and fewer still
Will act; and those who do may do no more
Than a few shipwrecked generals on an island
Might do if they were all to draw their swords
At once, and then make faces and throw stones

At my perfidious and indifferent image.
I fear, my master, you are left behind.
One of these days, the world will be a hive—
The veritable asylum you deplore
So vainly now. Then every little bee
Will have his little task, and having done it,
His time to play. So all will be in order,
And the souring hopes of individuals
To be some day themselves, though God knows how,
Will all be sweetened with synthetic honey.
The waste of excellence that you call art
Will be a thing remembered as a toy
Dug somewhere from forgotten history;
And this infirmity that you name love
Will be subdued to studious procreation.

DIONYSUS

Of what?

DEMOS

Why, of Reason and Equality.

DIONYSUS

Your twins again. With you for the king-bee,
And with an army of converted drones

Stinging your hive to order, as you say,
Where then would be the purpose or the need
Of any such hive? Were it not better now,
Beforehand, to forestall monotony
And servitude with one complete carouse,
Capped with a competent oblivion—
Or with a prayer at least for such an end?
If in the sorry picture that you flaunt
Before me as your ultimate panorama
Of an invertebrate futility
You see no reason to be sick at heart,—
I do. I see a reason to shed tears.
What will be left in your millennium
When self and soul are gone and all subdued
Insensibly?

DEMOS

Self and soul will not be missed,
Having been rather too much in the way,
And too long, for the good of the machine,
In which I see an end and a beginning.
Men have been playing heretofore too much
With feeling and with unprofitable fancy.

DIONYSUS

I see an end, but not yet the beginning.
Feeling and fancy? What do you know of them?

DEMOS

Enough to say that in the kingdom coming—
O yes, I shall be king—they shall be whipped
And rationed into reason. Where a few
That are peculiar would precede the many,
Measures are always waiting.

DIONYSUS

If there be not
A few that are peculiar in your world,
Your world will be a more peculiar place
Than all your nightmares have inhabited;
And howsoever you compel your zeal
To swallow your deceit, I'll apprehend
Their presence even in your machinery.
Something will break if they are not subdued,

DEMOS

They will be ground to death if they are there,
And in the way.

DIONYSUS

And if the machine breaks
In breaking them, who patches the machine?
You and your amiable automatons
Will have no more the feeling or the fancy
To prove or guess what ails it.

DEMOS

The machine,
Once running, will run always. As for you,
You will be driven off somewhere from the world,
And in some hell of exile and remembrance
Will see how it all goes, and how securely
The mechanistic hive subdues itself
To system and to order—and to Reason.

DIONYSUS

And to Equality. How do you know today
That I may not return again from hell—
Acceptably, perchance—and bring some honey?

DEMOS

Your sort of honey will have no taste then
For palates that are duly neutralized;

And all its evil sweet and stickiness
Will be a freight for you to ferry back
To the same place where you discovered it.

DIONYSUS

Why do you so invidiously insist
That I shall go so far—or that my honey
Is half so evil or so inimical
As that of your abject anticipation?

DEMOS

Abject? I do not wholly see it so.

DIONYSUS

It must have been the milder side of me
That held a lodging for so mild a word.
While I consider the complaint slaves
That you would have subdued to your machine,
I beg your mechanistic leave to shudder,
For your "subdued" pursues me.

DEMOS

As in due time
It will for certain seize you and arraign you
For what you are.

DIONYSUS

Would that it might do so!
Yet that's the one of all things onerous
And easy that will not be done for me.
Simplicity was not my father's name,
Nor was it ever mine; yet I'm unfeigned
To see, for those who may. My mother died
Because she would see God. I did not die.
Was it not strange that I should be twice born
For nothing, if I be what you make of me—
A lord of life that has no worthier fate
Than one of hell, with death and evil honey
For my companionship and consolation?

DEMOS

I have not made of you a lord of life;
And as for recommending hell and honey,

There may be one for you without the other.
We shall have neither here.

DIONYSUS

I'm of a mind
To prophecy that you may have the one
And hunger for the other, till presently
You shall have both again, as you do now.
My way would not be yours; and my machine
Would have a more forbearing alternation
Attending a less dread beneficence.

DEMOS

What do you mean by that?

DIONYSUS

I mean as much
As an observing child might understand
Who grows to see between him and another
A living difference and an impetus
To breathe and be himself. I mean, also,
An increment of reason not like yours,
Which is the crucifixion of all reason,

But one that quickens in the seed of truth
And is the flower of truth—not always fair,
Yet always to be found if you will see it.
There *is* a Demos, and you know his name
By force of easy stealing; yet his face
Would be one of a melancholy stranger
To you if he saw yours. I know his face,
And why he keeps it hidden until the wreck
Of your invention shall betray itself
As a monstrosity beyond repair,
And only by slow toil to be removed.
I mean that all your frantic insolence
Of hate and of denatured eagerness
To build in air a solid monument
From the wrong end will end in a collapse,
With you beneath it bellowing for relief
Not interested or available.
I mean that of all noxious tyrannies
Potential in imaginable folly,
The tyrant of the most intolerable
And unenduring will obscure himself
With much the same suave and benevolent mask
As this that you are wearing now to cover

The guile you dare not show to your disciples.
I mean that your delirious clumsy leap
From reason to the folly you call reason
Will only make of you and of your dupes
A dislocated and unlovely mess
For undertakers, who are not yet born
To view the coming ruin that is to be
Their occupation and emolument—
If your delusion for a time prevail,
As like enough it will. I mean, also,
That after suffering time has had enough
Of you and of your sterile dispensation,
Some wholesome fire of thought and competence
Will make of what is left a cannistered
Memorial of unlovely orts and ashes,
To be a warning and a wonderment
Where you shall plot no more. I mean a world
Fit for a self-defending human race
To recognize, and finally to live in.

DEMOS

I'll put the clamps on harder, just for that,
And let you see what Reason really is,

In fact and action. We have had too much
Of the insurgent individual
With his free fancy and free this and that,
And his ingenuous right to be himself.
What right has anyone now to be himself
Since I am here to fix him in his place
And hold him there? And as for your fit world,
I'll have it all alike and of a piece—
Punctual, accurate, tamed and uniform,
And equal. Then romance and love and art
And ecstasy will be remembrances
Of man's young weakness on his way to reason.
When my world's once in order, you shall see.

DIONYSUS

I may, but God forbid the sight of it.
I'd rather stay in hell, which you imply
To be preparing for me.

DEMOS

I approve
Unspeakably of such a preference
On your part. Go at once, for all I care,
And stay.

DIONYSUS

I may go somewhere, for a while,
But I am one of those who have perforce
To live and to return. Should there be need
Of me, I may remain; and you may find
One day a merry welcome waiting you
In the same place where you say I belong:
Take off your mask and find another name,
Or I'll be sure you will. Good morning, Demos.

DEMOS

Good morning, Dionysus. Wait and see.

HECKMAN BINDERY
BOUND TO
JUL 30 943
PLEASE
N. MANCHESTER, IND.